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ABSTRACT

This report reviews some major demographic findings reported by the United States Census Bureau during 1989. U.S. population is growing by about 1 percent per year; since the 1980 census, population has increased by 231 million (10.2 percent) to an estimated 249.6 million on January 1, 1990. Population growth will slow and possibly stop within the next 50 years. The South and West are the most rapidly growing regions, having experienced 87 percent of the nation's growth between 1980 and 1989, compared with 61 percent in the 1960s. A large percentage (51 percent) of growth during the 1980s has occurred in California, Texas, and Florida. Population growth is concentrated in metropolitan areas, but the long decline of the farm population has stopped. Average household size has reached a record low; the average number of people per household in 1989 was 2.62, compared with 2.76 in 1980 and 3.14 in 1970. There were 92.8 million households in 1989, up by 15 percent since 1980. Women with newborns have increased their labor force participation. In 1988, 51 percent of women 18 to 44 years old with infants under 1 year old were in the labor force, compared with 38 percent in 1980 and 31 percent in 1976. Voter turnout hit a new low in the last presidential election, with only 57 percent of the voting age populaton going to the polls in November 1988. Poverty and median family income in 1988 are not significantly different from the 1987 figures, and the home ownership rate held steady in 1989. (MLH)

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How We're Changing

Demographic State of the Nation: 1989

Current Population Reports
Special Studies
Series P-23, No. 164
January 1990

This is an overview of some major demographic findings reported by the Census Bureau during 1989. If you are interested in additional information, contact one of our subject specialists listed at the end of this report.

Our population is growing by about 1 percent per year.

On January 1, 1990, we estimate that the resident population of the United States was 249.6 million, about 2.5 million higher than the 1989 New Year's Day figure. Since the 1980 census, our population has increased by 23.1 million, or 10.2 percent.

In 1989, the Nation had about 3.9 million births, 2.1 million deaths, and a net immigration of 700,000. Births since 1985 have been at their highest level since the mid-1960's.

March 1989 estimates, which are restricted to the civilian noninstitutional population, show 29.7 million Blacks, 12.3 percent of the total population. At the same date, there were 20.1 million Hispanics (who may be of any race), 8.3 percent of the total population. (Data on the White and Black populations are based on a race question; data on the Hispanic population are based on an ethnic origin question.)

Our growth will slow and possibly stop within 50 years.

Using the middle series projection, we see the population peaking at about 302 million in 2038, and then declining slowly. Long term, we assume 1.8 births per woman, an average life span of 81 years, and an annual net immigration of 500,000.

The lowest series projects that the population will peak at 265 million in 2016, and the highest series sees an increase to 278 million in 2000 and to 388 million in 2040. The long-term assumptions for the lowest series are 1.5 births, a 78-year life span, and 300,000 net immigration; for the highest series, they are 2.2 births, an 88-year life span, and 800,000 immigration.

The elderly population will increase at a moderate rate until about 2010. Then, the 1946-64 Baby Boom generation will begin to enter the 65-and-over age group and accelerate the elderly rate of growth (figure 1).

The South and West are our most rapidly growing regions.

These two regions experienced 87 percent of our Nation's growth between 1980 and 1989; 90 percent of our growth in the 1970's was concentrated in these areas, compared with 61 percent in the 1960's. The proportion of the population living in the South and West rose from 48 percent in 1970 to 52 percent in 1980 to 55 percent in 1989.

Fifty-one percent of this decade's growth has occurred in California, Texas, and Florida (up from 42 percent in the 1970's and 32 percent in the 1960's). In 1989, 11.7 percent of U.S. residents lived in California—

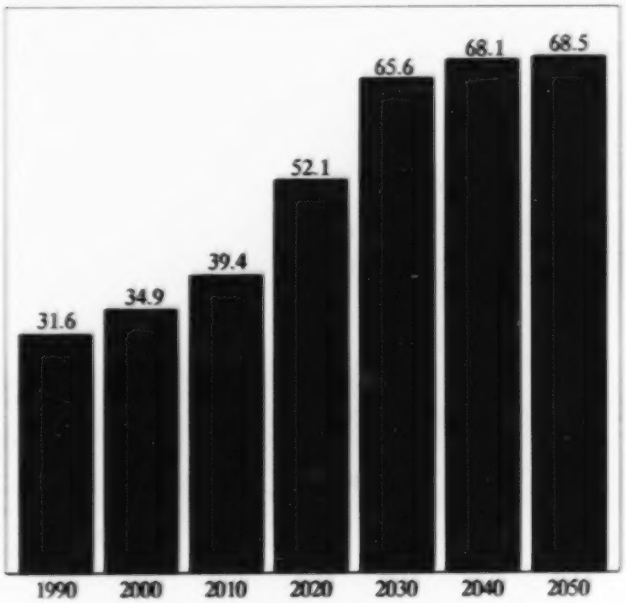

Figure 1.
Projections of the Elderly Population: 1990 to 2050
(Middle series projections, in millions)

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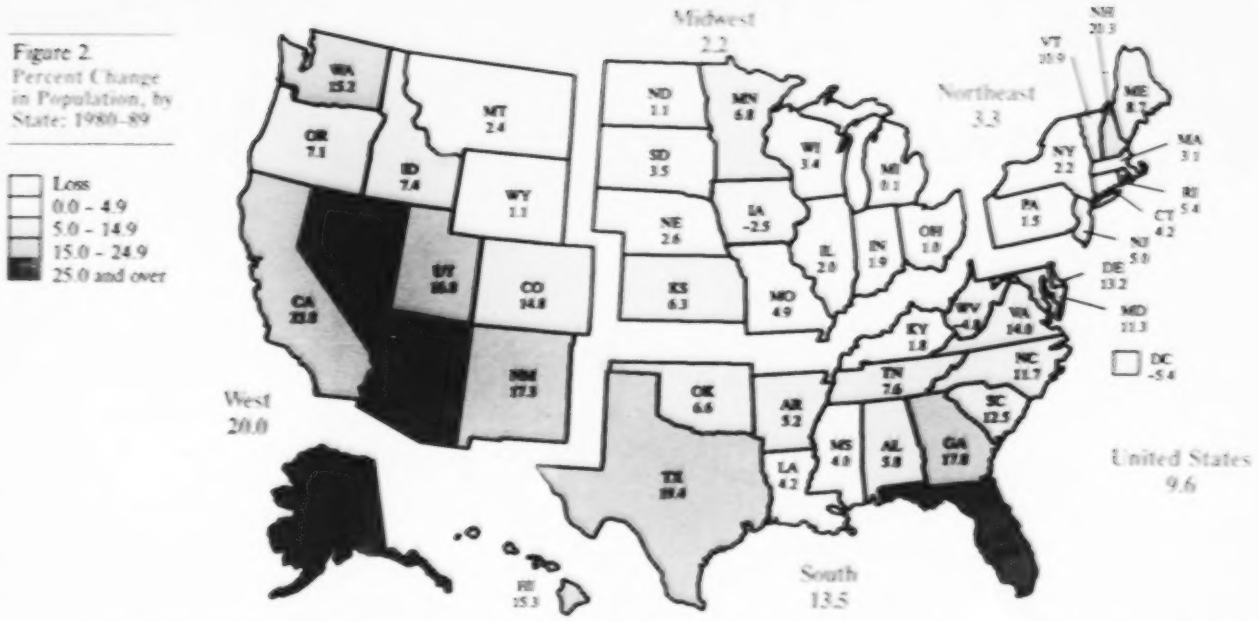
Figure 2.
Percent Change in Population, by State: 1980–89



the highest concentration in one State since 1860, when 12.3 percent lived in New York. California alone had more residents in 1989 (29.1 million) than did the 21 least populous States combined.

Nevada, Alaska, and Arizona grew the fastest between 1980 and 1989; only West Virginia, Iowa, and the District of Columbia lost population during that time (figure 2).

Population growth is concentrated in metropolitan areas.

In 1988, 77 percent of all Americans lived in the 283 designated metropolitan areas. These areas grew by 9.7 percent between 1980 and 1988, while the nonmetropolitan population increased by just 4.5 percent.

Forty-nine percent of the Nation's population lived in the 37 metropolitan areas with 1 million or more people. The most rapid growth between 1980 and 1988 in these areas occurred in Phoenix (34.5 percent), Dallas–Ft. Worth (28.5 percent), and Atlanta (28 percent). The largest numerical growth was in Los Angeles (2.3 million), followed by Dallas–Ft. Worth (835,000).

The long decline of the farm population has stopped.

Our farm population was 5 million in 1988, unchanged from the 1987 figure. Between 1940 and 1980, the number of Americans living on farms dropped from 31 million to 6 million.

In 1988, 51 percent of the farm population lived in the Midwest, and 30 percent lived in the South. In 1950, the situation was reversed: 32 percent lived in the Midwest, and 52 percent lived in the South.

Average household size reaches a record low.

The average number of people per household in 1989 was 2.62, compared with 2.76 in 1980 and 3.14 in 1970.

There were 92.8 million households in 1989, up by 15 percent since 1980. Seventy-one percent of these households contained families, down from 74 percent in 1980 and 81 percent in 1970. (Families have at least two members, including at least one relative of the householder.)

Figure 3 shows that the composition of these family households varies greatly among Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics.

Nonfamily households increased rapidly from 11.9 million in 1970 to 21.2 million in 1980 and more slowly to 27 million in 1989. Currently, people living alone account for 84 percent of these nonfamily situations.

10 Largest Metropolitan Areas in 1988 and Percent Change, 1980–88

(Population in thousands. Identified by first city in official title. 1980 rank in parentheses)

New York (1)	18,120	3.3%
Los Angeles (2)	13,770	19.8%
Chicago (3)	8,181	3.1%
San Francisco (5)	6,042	12.6%
Philadelphia (4)	5,963	5.0%
Detroit (6)	4,620	-2.8%
Boston (7)	4,110	3.5%
Dallas (10)	3,766	28.5%
Washington (8)	3,734	14.9%
Houston (9)	3,642	17.5%

10 Largest Cities in 1988 and Percent Change, 1980–88

(Population in thousands. 1980 rank in parentheses)

New York, NY (1)	7,353	4.0%
Los Angeles, CA (3)	3,353	12.9%
Chicago, IL (2)	2,978	-0.9%
Houston, TX (5)	1,698	6.5%
Philadelphia, PA (4)	1,647	-2.4%
San Diego, CA (8)	1,070	22.2%
Detroit, MI (6)	1,036	-13.9%
Dallas, TX (7)	987	9.1%
San Antonio, TX (11)	941	19.7%
Phoenix, AZ (9)	924	17.0%

Women with newborns have increased their labor force participation.

In 1988, 51 percent of women 18 to 44 years old with infants under 1 year old were in the labor force, compared with 38 percent in 1980 and 31 percent in 1976. Women with less than a high school education increased their rate from 26 percent in 1976 to 34 percent in 1988. Women who were college graduates saw their rate jump from 39 percent to 60 percent during the same period.

In 1988, 33 percent of all births were to women in their thirties, compared with only 19 percent in 1976. This change reflects not only the increased birth rates to women in this age group, but also the large numbers of Baby Boomers now of childbearing age. The overall fertility rate has not changed significantly since 1976, however, and the average number of lifetime births expected by women 18 to 34 years old has remained between 2.0 and 2.1 during the past decade.

Voter turnout hit a new low in the Presidential election.

Only 57 percent of the voting-age population reported that they went to the polls in November 1988. This reported rate was down from 60 percent in 1984, and well below the 69 percent reported in 1964, the first year that the Census Bureau collected data on voting. (Reported voting rates tend to be high; the actual figure in 1988 was about 50 percent.)

Voting rates vary widely by people's characteristics. In 1988, the reported rates were 59 percent for Whites and 52 percent for Blacks. The rate was 29 percent for Hispanics (37 percent of Hispanics surveyed were not U.S. citizens, so they were ineligible to register). People 45 and over voted at a rate of 68 percent, compared with 36 percent for 18- to 24-year-olds. College graduates reported a rate of 78 percent, while people with 8 or fewer years of school had a rate of 37 percent.

Poverty and median family income are unchanged in 1988.

There were 31.7 million people below the official government poverty level in 1988—13.0 percent of the population. These figures, revisions of estimates published earlier, are not significantly different from those for 1987. Median family income in 1988 ($32,190) also was not significantly different from the 1987 figure after adjusting for the 4.1 percent increase in consumer prices. The 1988 poverty and income data for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics are shown in figures 4 and 5; they also are not significantly different from those in 1987.

Real per capita income increased by 1.7 percent between 1987 and 1988—it reached a record high of $13,120. At the same time, real median earnings of men working year-round, full-time dropped by 1.3 percent in 1988 to $26,660; their female counterparts' earnings ($17,610) did not change significantly. The ratio of female to male earnings was .66 in 1988, up from .60 in 1980.

(Income and poverty figures are based on pre-tax money income before deductions and without noncash benefits.)

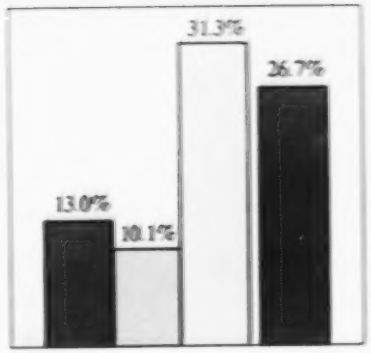


Figure 4.
Poverty Rate for Persons, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1988

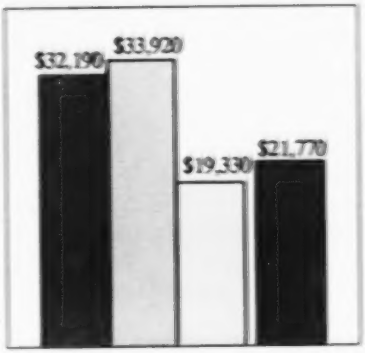


Figure 5.
Median Family Income, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1988

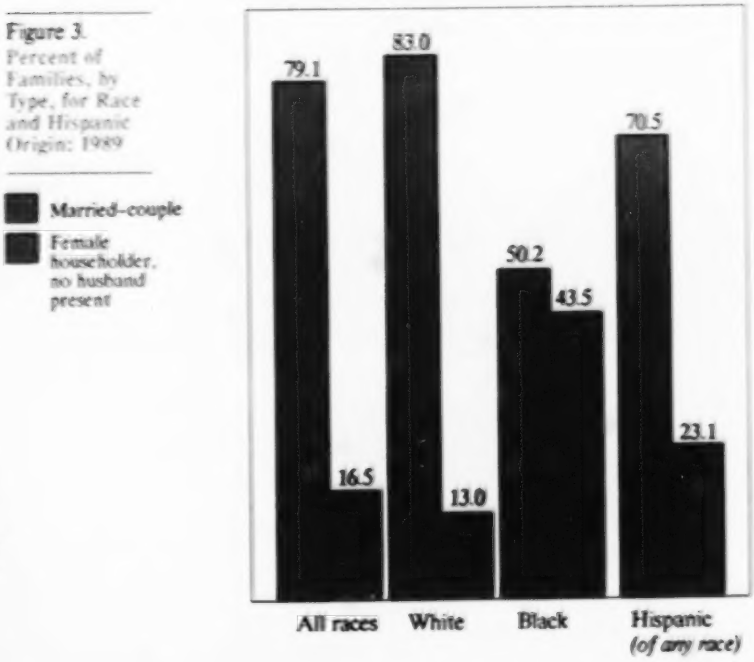


Figure 3.
Percent of Families, by Type, for Race and Hispanic Origin: 1989

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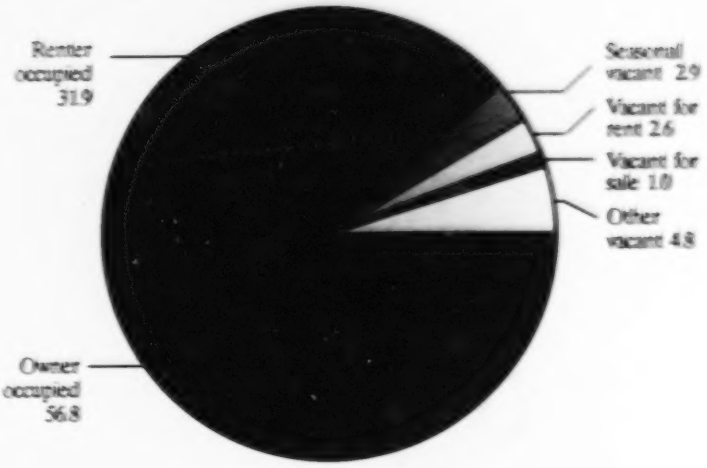
Homeownership rate holds steady in 1989.

In the third quarter of 1989, owners lived in 64 percent of occupied housing units, unchanged from the rate a year earlier, but lower than the third quarter 1980 rate of 66 percent. The rental vacancy rate was 7.3 percent in the third quarter of 1989, down from 7.8 percent a year earlier. The homeowner vacancy rate has remained in the 1-2 percent range during the 1980's.

There were 105.5 million housing units in the Nation in the third quarter of 1989: 93.6 million (88.7 percent) were occupied and 11.9 million (11.3 percent) were vacant (figure 6).

Percent Distribution of Total Housing Inventory



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Source and Accuracy of Estimates

The data presented here are from the population estimates and projections program and the Current Population Survey. All statistics are subject to sampling variability when based on a survey as well as to survey design errors, respondent classification and reporting errors, and data processing mistakes. The Census Bureau has taken steps to minimize errors, and statistical statements have been tested and meet statistical standards. Further information can be found in detailed reports.

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